

REMARKS

This application has been reviewed in light of the FINAL REJECTION mailed May 8, 2009. Reconsideration of this application in view of the below remarks is respectfully requested. Claims 18 – 20 and 22 – 42 are pending in the application with Claim 18 being in independent form.

By the present amendment, Claim 18 is amended to recite: "...a central axis of the hollow bellows being substantially in line with a central axis of the tubular member..." No new subject matter is introduced into the disclosure by way of the present amendment.

I. Rejection of Claims 18 – 20 and 28 – 28 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 18 – 20 and 28 – 28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,776,049 issued to Takahashi, in view of U.S Patent No. 5,520,222 issued to Chikama and U.S. Patent No. 5,577,991 issued Akui et al. (hereinafter "Akui"), and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,485,409 issued to Voloshin et al. (hereinafter, "Voloshin").

As has been previously argued, Takahashi, Chikama, Akui and MacKinnon fail to teach all of the limitations of the claims. Specifically, the cited references fail to suggest or render obvious a hollow bellows portion, as recited in Claim 18.

In response to the arguments presented in the Amendment dated February 17, 2009, the present Office Action cites the teachings in Voloshin. In particular, the present Office Action notes that Voloshin discloses hollow bellows, presumably in the form of opposing bellows 25 and 27.

However, the bellows in the present invention is a single bellows positioned such that the central axis of the bellows is in line with the central axis of the tubular member. In Voloshin, the

two bellows 25 and 27 are positioned at a top and bottom portions of the probe. The central axis of neither of the bellows in Voloshin is in line with the central axis of the probe body.

Moreover, modification of the arrangement of the bellows in Voloshin to correspond to the positioning of Applicants' bellows would render the Voloshin bellows inoperable for their intended purpose, namely as a means for steering the probe by alternatively inflating one or the other of the bellows in order to cause the probe tip to bend in a given direction. Instead, having a Voloshin bellows centrally positioned so that the central axis is in line with the central axis of the tubular member would result in the bellows causing a horizontal movement of the probe tip when inflated or deflated. No bending motion would be imparted to the probe tip by a bellows so arranged. Consequently, one of ordinary skill in the art would not combine the cited references as suggested in the present Office Action.

Therefore, for at least the reasons present, Claims 18 – 20 and 28 – 28 are believed to be allowable over the cited prior art references. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection with respect to Claims 18 – 20 and 28 – 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Takahashi, in view of Chikama and Akui, and further in view of Voloshin.

II. Rejection of Claims 29 – 41 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 29 – 41 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly obvious over Takahashi in view of Chikama, Akui and Voloshin, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,110,106 issued to MacKinnon et al. (hereinafter, "MacKinnon").

MacKinnon, taken alone or in any proper combination with Takahashi, Chikama, Akui and Voloshin, fails to overcome the deficiencies identified above. Therefore, since Claims 29 – 41 depend from independent Claim 18, these claims are believed to be allowable over the cited prior art references for at least the reasons presented above.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection with respect to Claims 29 – 42 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Takahashi, in view of Chikama, Akui and Voloshin, and further in view of MacKinnon.

CONCLUSIONS

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all claims presently pending in the application, namely, Claims 18 – 20 and 22 – 42 are believed to be in condition for allowance and patentably distinguishable over the art of record.

If the Examiner should have any questions concerning this communication or feels that an interview would be helpful, the Examiner is requested to call Applicant's undersigned attorney at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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